
Memories of highly charged events, like the London bombings of the 7th July 2005, can be inaccurate and should not be relied on in court, according to a study in Britain. People can create false memories, posing problems for police investigations. Oliver Conway reports:

The **simultaneous** bombings of three underground trains and a double-decker bus in London three years ago are **imprinted on the minds of** many people in Britain.

But our memories of the attacks **are unreliable**, according to a study from Portsmouth University. 40% of British students questioned about the events remembered seeing **CCTV footage** of the bus bomb - footage which never existed. A further 28% claimed to have seen a non-existent computerised reconstruction.

Some even recalled specific details of the attack, which none of them **witnessed**. "The bus had just stopped to let people off when two women and a man got on", said one. "He placed a bag by his side, the woman sat down and as the bus left, there was an explosion. There was a leg on the floor". Another described how the bus had stopped at a traffic light when there was a bright light, a loud **bang** and **the top flew off**.

"Memories are not like videotape you can **rewind** and replay for **perfect recall**", said lead researcher James Ost. "Because of this, they are not reliable enough to form the basis of legal decisions". He believes people who are more creative might be more **prone to** these kind of errors.

Oliver Conway, BBC

Vocabulary and definitions

simultaneous	happening at the same time
imprinted on the minds of	very well remembered by
are unreliable	cannot be trusted/counted on because they may not be accurate
CCTV footage	a film recorded by a CCTV camera that shows a particular event (CCTV is short for 'closed-circuit television', a system which sends television signals to a small number of screens, often used in shops or other public places to protect people against crime)
witnessed	saw with their own eyes
bang	here, an explosion/a blast
the top flew off	the roof of the bus was blown off by the power of the blast
rewind	return to the beginning
perfect recall	here, completely accurate and very detailed account/record
prone to	easily affected by, inclined to make

More on this story: http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/memory/understand/false_memories.shtml

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2008/12/081222_false_memories.shtml